

## The Hichhiker's Guide to the X-Files

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Summary: While waiting to be picked up, Ford meets up with Special Agent Fox Mulder.

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X-FILES

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## THE HITCHHIKER'S GUIDE TO THE X-FILES

BY DAVID ANAKIN

Special Agent Fox Mulder made his way carefully in the dark woods. He was in what city people colorfully called The Boon-Docks. There had been a lot of U.F.O. activity in this area for the past few weeks. Odd lights would buzz farms and mysterious objects would wake everyone up in the early morning hours. That didn't seem to bother the locals as much as the people showing up trying to explain them. "Weird crap happens." They would say, then go back to their hens or tractors. The full moon overhead made his pale skin look even paler which in turn made his dark hair look darker. Instead of his usual dark drab suit he wore a flannel jacket, light yellow t-shirt, a pair of faded blue jeans, and a bright orange hat. The shirt had originally been white, but being a man and thus genetically incapable of doing laundry, it had turned yellow. Of course being a man, he found he didn't really care. Mulder wouldn't have the hat if he hadn't stopped at a store to ask directions. Mulder thought since he had a flashlight he would be safe from hunters, but the man behind the counter had said, "Better safe than shot in the head." And since he couldn't think of a good argument for this sales pitch, he bought the hat. He had everything he would need in his knapsack, except a

camera. There was a time when Mulder always had a camera. But people would always show up and steal, burn, or otherwise destroy whatever pictures he took. It was a pain in the ass, but didn't take a bit out of his wallet because he always charged it to the Bureau. Then one day he got a memo saying they would no longer pay for film, so he had to stop taking pictures. He seemed to have better luck with other peoples' pictures anyway. The flashlight went out and he stopped to change the batteries, at least he could still charge those to the Bureau! He had almost tripped over a dozen hidden obstacles in the dark. It would just be his luck that a U.F.O. would come flying over while he was laying face down in the muck. Mulder followed the beam of light deeper into the woods. He saw a figure move between the trees and went in closer to get a better look.

"Do you mind pointing that thing down? I'm trying to concentrate." said the oddly dressed man in front of Mulder. He spoke with an English accent. He was white with curly brown hair and had on a dark brown jacket with yellow strips, black pants, and a checker-board pattern shirt. He was a little over five feet tall. He was also holding a short squat black rod, smooth and matt with a couple of flat switches and dials at one end. It didn't look like a weapon so Mulder pulled out his I.D. and held the flashlight up so the man could see it.

"I'm Special Agent Fox Mulder, with the F.B.I., would you mind telling me who you are, what you're doing and what that is?"

"Not at all. You can call me Ford Prefect. This is my Electronic Thumb, and I'm trying to hitch a lift. Must be nice having an I.D. that says you're special, must make you feel veryâ€¦.. well special." he said this while looking back and forth between Mulder, the sky, and the Thumb. When he had said what he had to say he just looked between the sky and the Thumb.

Mulder put his I.D. away. Hitch a lift? The closest road was the dirt path Mulder parked his car on. That was about three miles from the main road. He looked at the odd thing Mr. Prefect was holding and a thought occurred to him. "You're not trying to get a ride on a U.F.O. are you?"

Ford Prefect looked back at Mulder and smiled, "You know, I never get tired of the cute names people have of them. Don't care for all of them, but some of them are quite cute. Two of my favorites are T.T.B.U.A.D.I.T.S.'s and W.T.'s."

"What do they stand for?"

"Well the first one stands for Things That Bob Up And Down In The Sky and the other is What's That."

"I haven't heard of either of those, are you an expert on aliens?" Mulder asked but he thought he already knew the answer.

"You know I've never liked the word expert. The very idea someone can try and claim to know everything about a subject shows how dumb he really is. And alien? Well that depends on your point of view. To me YOU are the alien."

"Are you saying you're from out there, Mr. Prefect?" Mulder pointed up. He didn't like where this conversation was going. The last thing

he wanted was to deal with a U.F.O. nut in the middle of the woods in the middle of the night.

"Oh no." he said pointing in the other direction, " I'm from over there. People in that area are horrible. I think it's because they don't get any good carnivals and the pastries are lousy. And please call me Ford."

Mulder wasn't about to let himself get pulled into whatever universe this man had made for himself. He's obviously insane, and in need of help. That's what Scully would say. Mulder didn't like the idea of wrestling him out of the dark woods and couldn't leave him here alone. Could he? He had another idea. "So you're trying to signal your space ship?"

"If I had a ship, I wouldn't be out here trying to hitch a lift. I'm a field researcher for the Guide."

" T.V. Guide?" Mulder asked playing along. He was hoping to appear friendly so this guy would want to follow him out.

"No. The Hitchhiker's Guide To The Galaxy. It's a kind of electronic book, tells you all kinds of interesting things. Or uninteresting, if that's what you're into."

"You mean an encyclopedia of outer space?"

"No. The Guide's much better. For one thing, it's slightly cheaper and another is its cover."

Now Mulder had him. "Could I see it?"

"Sure, hold on a bit." Ford stuck the Electronic Thumb in his armpit bent over and reached into his satchel, which Mulder didn't notice before because it was the same color as the ground, dark brown. As Ford looked, Mulder was beginning to wonder if this man was crazy or not. Is it possible he knew what was going on out there?

"Have you ever heard of something called the Black Cancer?" Mulder asked. It was a test. He could be one of the Cigarette Smoking Man's men sent to lead me off the path, Mulder thought.

"Sure. Very nasty. Very angry. I think it's because they can't do the things the rest of us enjoy. Like looking at a sunset, having tea, reading Playboy, putting our feet in the water, or masturbating." Mulder's cheeks grew red at the last one, "That's why I always carry this." Ford pulled out a large pink oval-shaped sponge. With his other hand he pulled out a dull brown plastic container about the size of a hard cover book. Putting the sponge back, he handed the container to Mulder. Ford went back to his Thumb, as Mulder turned the container around, printed on the side in large red letters were the words "DON'T PANIC".

"Always good advice." Mulder commented.

"I always thought so. Open it up and punch in 'Black Cancer, Origin Of'."

Mulder did as he was told and found what looked like as electronic organizer. It had very small buttons labeled like a keyboard. Odd how

something from outer space would have English letters on it. He asked Ford about that.

"It's user friendly. And no don't ask me how it works, I told you I'm a researcher I didn't invent the bloody thing!"

Mulder decided not to push him and looked up the information. This is what the Guide says about the origin of the Black Cancer:

Many, many years ago there was a proud ship. With a proud Captain, who commanded a proud crew. Indeed it was a very proud ship, with many proud parts, gears, and other assorted items. The only thing that wasn't proud was the lubricant that kept the doors from squeaking when they open and closed. This lubricant felt it should be paid for doing its job just like all the other liquids on the ship. The crew had never heard of anything so silly and said the lubricant should be happy to have a job and a place to live. So the lubricant went on strike and all over the ship men and women had to pull and push their doors because they couldn't open and close by themselves. This made the crew to tired to have sex. Which, by the way, was forbidden according to Company rules. Their motto was: Anything that makes a crewmember happy makes them lazy. The Captain, who hadn't been 'happy' all day, decided it was time to negotiate. And being very skilled at the art of diplomacy he give the lubricant a choice, work or be out of a job. It dared him to do it. The Captain ordered the lubricant jettisoned into space and had all the doors jammed open and curtains put up for when they wanted to 'sleep'. This didn't make the doors very happy, but after what happened to the lubricant, they where not going to complain. This worked out well the first day, but no one bothered putting room numbers on the curtains. So everyone went to the wrong rooms and caught others in the act of forbidden sex. Half the crew was executed for this crime, which included the proud Captain and Chief Engineer. The reminder of the crew went about writing numbers on the walls next to the doors. When the ship landed the crew was unable to get out because the main exit wouldn't open and was too big to push open. There was of course an emergency exit, which could be blown open, but the Captain hid the key. And his key hiding skills were second only to his diplomacy skills, so no one could find it. They then radioed the executives to get someone to cut open the door, but by the time the request got thru all the red tape the crew had starved to death. And since half the crew were killed for breaking the no sex rule and the other half died of natural causes (i.e. starvation.) the families were unable to collect the insurance. It's interesting to note that just up the street from the landing pad, on a corner, was a pool of lubricant holding a sign that said, "Will work for a place to live." But since there is an unwritten rule in most societies about ignoring anyone holding such signs, no one thought to ask it for help. When it did find out what had happened it stowed away on ship after ship until it found the lubricant that was jettisoned and together they decided it was high time something was done about these stupid humanoids once and for all. They soon became known as the Black Cancer.

Mulder looked at Ford Prefect who was still looking into the sky. I've never read anything so crazy in my life, he thought. For Mulder, this was quite a statement.

"You don't really expect me to believe this do you? I mean there are no names or times in this story." Mulder asked.

"Not at all. In this Universe, seeing isn't always believing." Ford answered, "But the planet wanted all names with held so no one would blow them up for unleashing the Black Cancer. As for the time, well the one who wrote that piece comes from a planet that doesn't believe in time."

"Why not?" Mulder asked inspite of himself, "Is it because the planet doesn't rotate or is it religious?"

"No. They just think time's this big scam to get people to buy digital watches."

Mulder wasn't sure what to think at this point. This so called Guide was a pretty good piece of electronic work. He thought of introducing this guy to The Lone Gunman, those guys would love Ford. Why am I calling him by his first name? There was just something about him. Maybe he's a plant to keep me busy and away from the U.F.O. hot spots. But if that were true, this Ford person would be moving away from here because this was the U.F.O. hot spot. Mulder had to find out about this guy once and for all.

"What does this say about Earth?" Mulder asked. But before he could look it up, Ford snatched it away from him. He asked for the container and put the Guide back in his satchel.

"Sorry." Ford said playing with the Electronic Thumb again, "The last human who saw what the Guide said about Earth got very upset. Of course, there were other things going on at the time which may have contributed to his state of mind."

By this time Mulder had decided he was talking to a crackpot. Exactly the kind of person Scully always warned him about. Or maybe a man who was to keep him away from something big that was happening right now. Mulder turned away and started walking back the way he came. He stopped, thinking this guy seemed okay but a lot of people seemed okay at first. For some reason Mulder didn't like the idea of leaving Ford in the middle of the woods at 3A.M., even if he did seem mostly harmless and looked like he might be fun at parties. Before Mulder could decide what to do, he heard laughing.

"Well! It's about time!" Ford shouted looking up.

Mulder looked up and saw a sickly green light slowly descending out of the night sky. It landed a few feet away and Ford began walking toward it before it even touched the ground. The light faded into a silver cigar shaped craft with flames painted down the side and a yellow light at one end. The light was pointed in Ford's direction when it stopped and hovered just above the ground. Three legs came out to touch the soft muck, two in the rear and one in the front, which doubled as a ramp. Everything was quite, even the crickets and wind.

"Oh wonderful." He heard Ford say looking up the ramp, "Teasers. Well, hitchers can't be choosers." Ford climbed up the ramp. Mulder stood hypnotized by the sight, wishing he'd brought a camera. Even if he had someone would have stolen it as soon as he stepped out of the woods. He saw Ford's head pop out of the doorway.

"Hey! Would you like to come along?"

Mulder couldn't believe what he heard. He asked Ford to repeat it.

"Why not. Traveling is like sex, the more the merrier." Ford yelled back.

This was incredible! It was more than he could have hoped for. It was his dreams come true. Maybe he could ask them to buzz the J. Edgar Hoover Building on their way out. This was really wild! So how come I'm not moving? He took two steps, tripped over a root, fell in the muck, and was knocked unconscious.

"Mulder." A voice called out of the darkness, "Mulder."

Mulder slowly opened his eyes. A large blurring thing was saying his name. The blurring thing came into focus, it looked a lot like Scully. After a while he decided it was Scully. She held up two fingers and asked, "How many do you see?"

Mulder held up his own two fingers and answered, "Peace out Man." He smiled and asked where he was.

"You're in a hospital. A couple of hunters found you in the woods just after sunrise. Said they wouldn't have seen you at all if it hadn't been for your hat. By the way, there was a note pinned to your jacket."

Scully handed Mulder a piece of paper. He could tell it had been written in a hurry, but he could still read it.

He read it aloud, "Dear Fox, Sorry you missed the flight; they look like a jolly group even if they are Teasers. But you shouldn't travel when you're that sleepy. It's bad enough when you're awake. But next time I come your way let's pop off to the Pub for a pint. Hoping you always know where your towel is, Ford."

"What's that's about?" Scully asked.

Mulder thought about telling her what happened. About The Hitchhikers Guide To The Galaxy, the Black Cancer, and the U.F.O. with the flames painted on the sides. Who the hell am I kidding?

"Just this hitchhiker I met in the woods." He answered.

THE END

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